
OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Efficiency and Resources Portfolio:

- (a) **Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan** – We have approved the 2009 Capital Strategy and Asset management Plan. Both of these documents are essential to provide the Council with a strategic platform in the use and management of its assets and at the same time to continue to satisfy the requirements of the Audit Commission and the Use of Resources KLOE assessment criteria.

As Members will be aware, the Capital Strategy sets out the way in which the Council determines and manages the Capital Programme and the linkages with the new Sustainable Community Strategy One Darlington – Perfectly Placed.

- (b) **Property Search Services** – Delegated powers have been given to the Director of Corporate Services to determine the scale of charges for providing access to property search information. The Council holds a range of property and environmental information within various Departments, which is used in the provision of a full local authority land search and by personal search companies. Under the Local Authorities Charges for Property Searches regulations 2008, Council's can now recover the cost of providing access to property information unless that information is free statutory information or where charges can be levied from other legislation. A costing exercise was undertaken to calculate the charges in accordance with the regulations and the guidance and the new charges came into effect on the 6th April, 2009.
- (c) **Local Taxation, Housing Benefits and Customer Services Centre – Review** – Officers have been given delegated powers to procure consultants to undertake a review of Local Taxation, Housing and Council Tax Benefits and the Council's Customer Services Centre to deliver efficiencies.
- (d) **Framework Agreement for Agency Staff** – We have agreed to appoint a number of companies to a Framework Agreement for the supply of Agency workers for the Council. By appointing to this Framework it is anticipated that the Council's expenditure on the use of agency staff will be significantly reduced.
- (e) **Procurement Annual Plan** – In accordance with Contract Procedure Rules, we have considered the Annual Procurement Plan and determined, again, in accordance with criteria, which contracts for the forthcoming year shall be delegated to the Officers and which are deemed to be strategic. Subsequent contracts will necessitate a revised Plan being brought to Cabinet.

- (f) **Xentrall Shared Services Annual Report** – Following the establishment of Xentrall, Cabinet received the annual report showing the achievements delivered in year one of the Partnership. The key aims of the Partnership were to improve efficiency, service performance and service resilience by bringing together the services of Darlington and Stockton and the business case and it is pleasing to report that the Partnership is on line to deliver its targets and already additional benefits beyond those envisaged in the business case are being delivered. The Partnership is one of the first of its kind in the country and therefore much of what has been achieved is innovative and challenging to deliver. It is a credit to the Partnership Team that so much has been achieved in this first year.
- (g) **ICT Strategy** – Also in relation to the Partnership, we have reviewed and refreshed the ICT Strategy to reflect the wide ranging programme of improvements being delivered by Xentrall ICT Services. The development of a clear, integrated and achievable Strategy is critical in supporting both the Council’s current and future service delivery aims and aspirations.
- (h) **Capital Programme Monitoring** – We have considered the current position of the Capital Programme. The current projected outturn of the 2008/09 Capital Programme is £136.917 million against an approved programme of £136.978 million. The programme has delivered a wide range of improvements to the Council’s assets and more critically to Council services.
- (i) **Revenue Budget Monitoring** – We have considered the current position of the revenue budget. It was reported to Cabinet that the projected General Fund corporate reserves position and departmental balances as at 31st March 2009 show an overall net reduction of £73,000 compared with the revised Medium Term Financial Plan approved by Council on 26th February, 2009.
- (j) **Schedule of Transactions** - A number of transactions, provisionally made by the Director of Corporate Services, have been approved.

2. I have attended the following meetings in respect of my Efficiency and Resources Portfolio:

- (a) Xentrall Partnership Consultative Panel – 31st March
- (b) Resources Scrutiny – 30th April
- (c) Joint Consultative Committee – 5th May
- (d) Various briefing meetings with Directors, and Assistant Directors

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio